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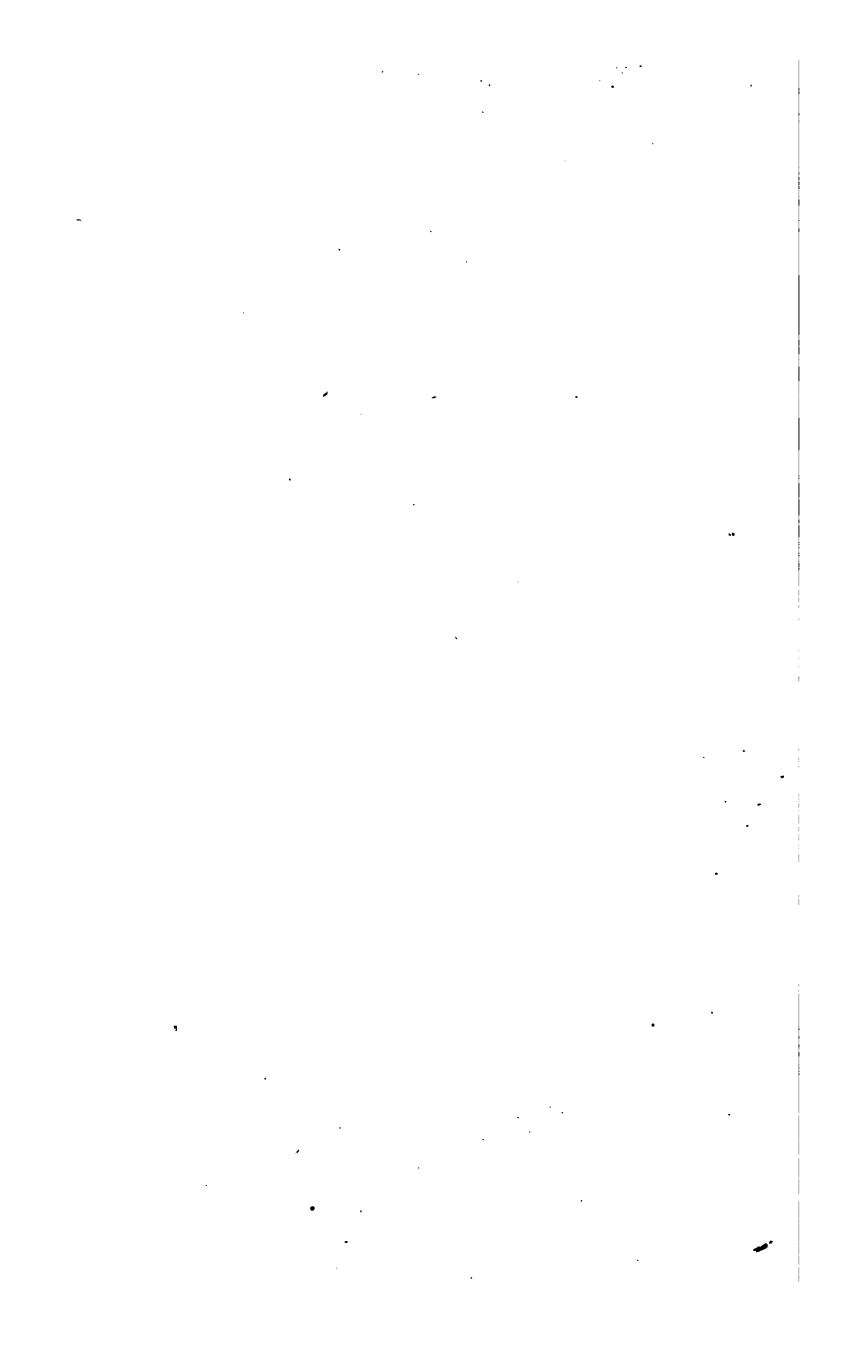
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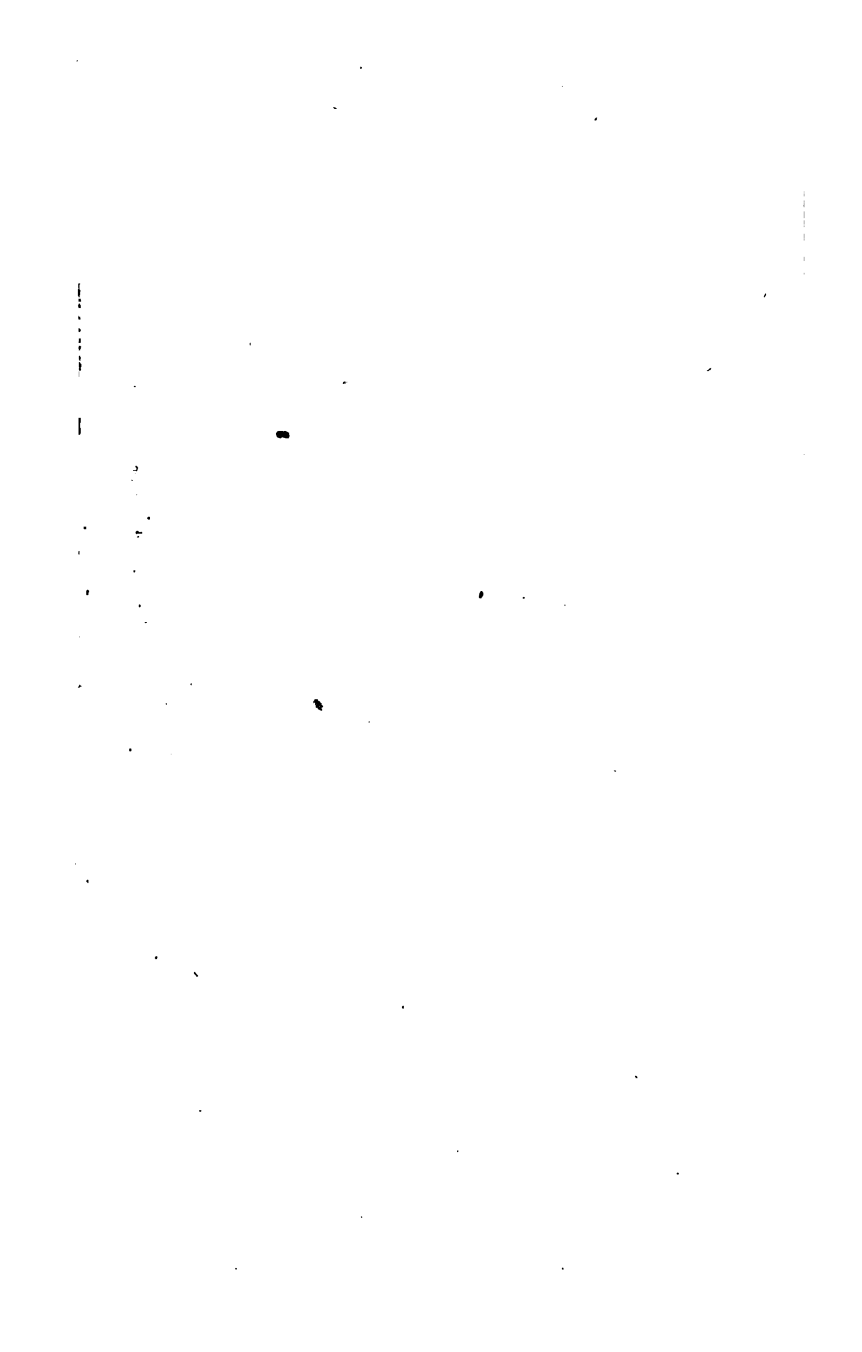
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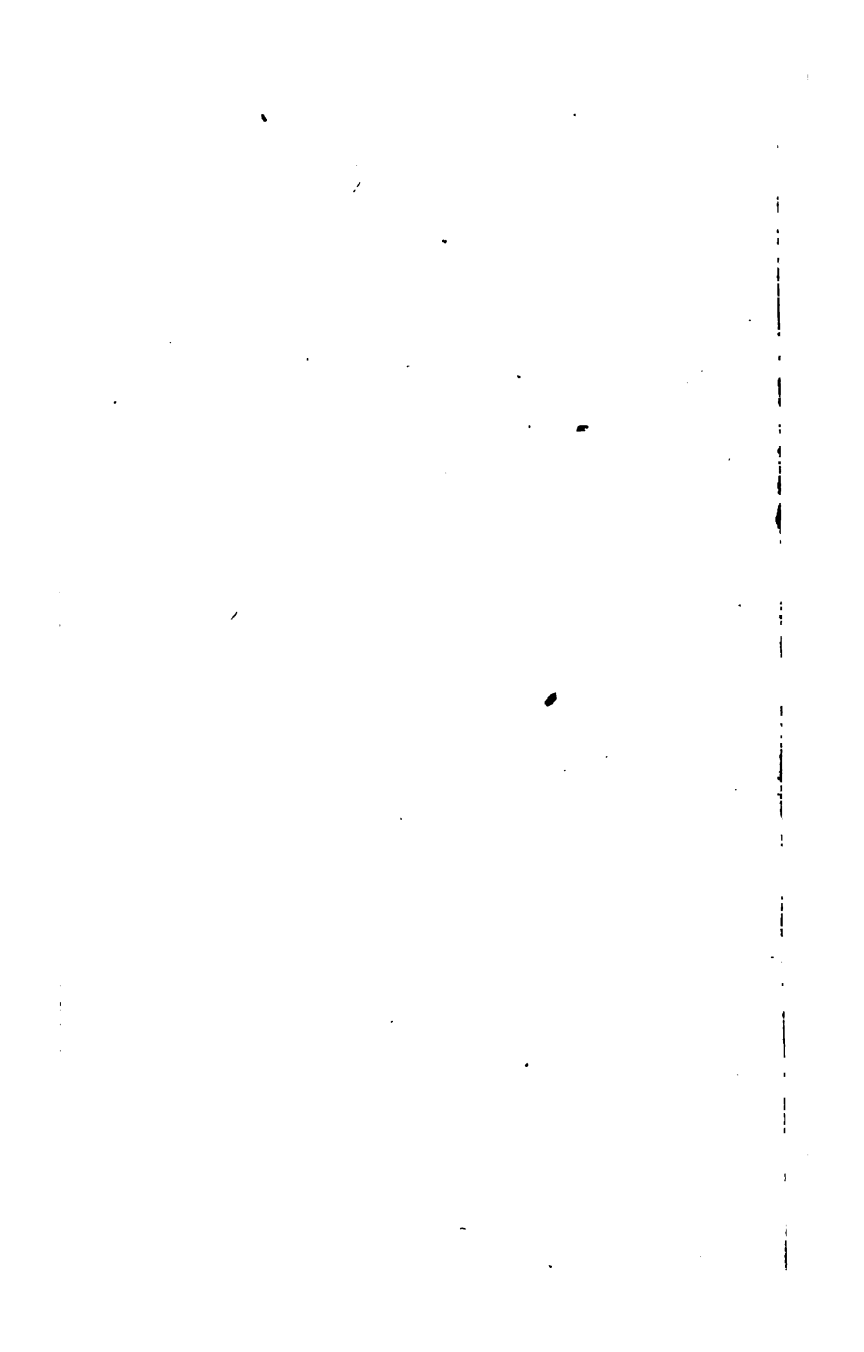
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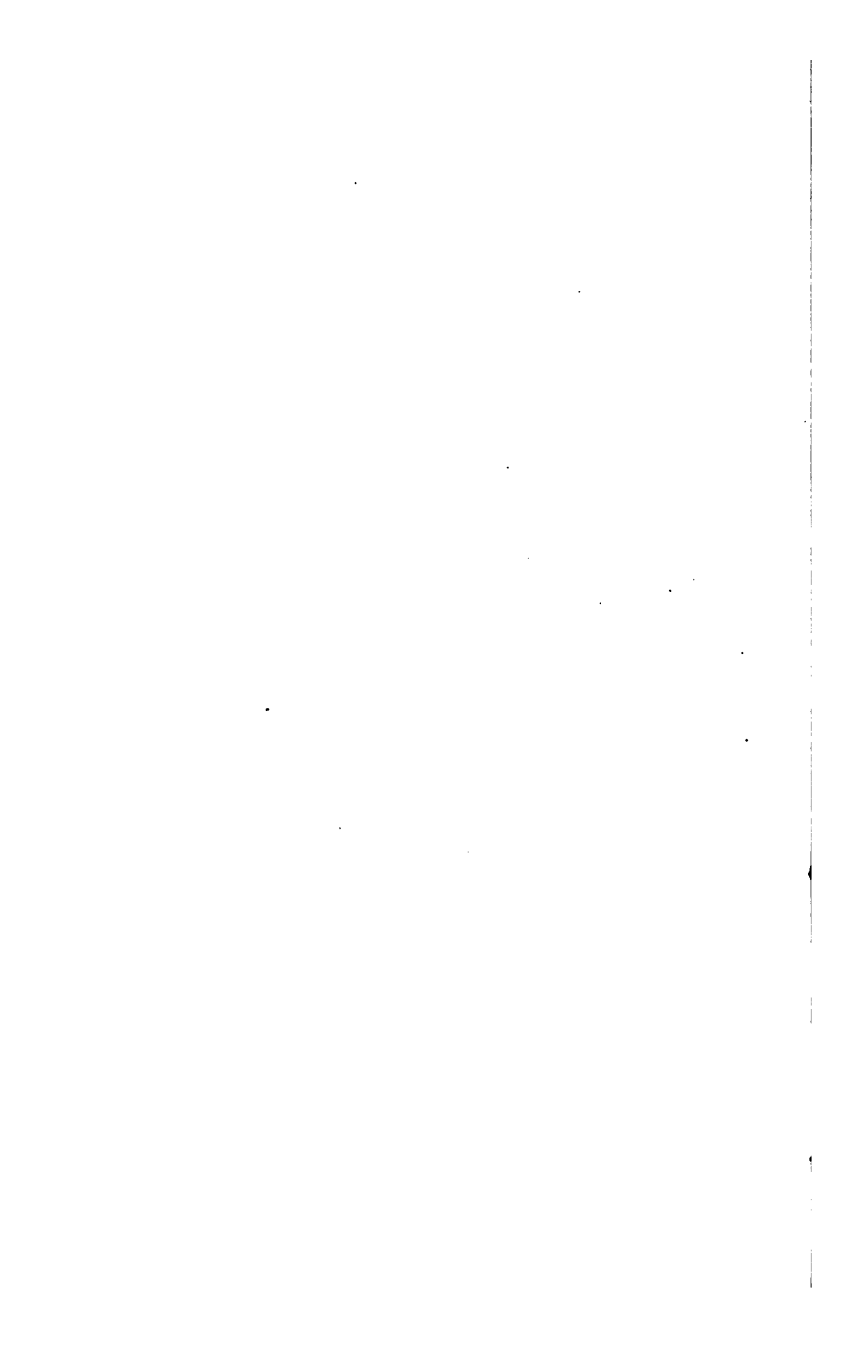








**LONDON
VISIONS**



FIRST BOOK OF
LONDON
VISIONS

BY
LAURENCE
BINYON



LONDON
ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET
1896

1888
R

TO
STEPHEN & MAY

168526

NOTE

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LONDON VISIONS

FIRST BOOK

I

THE SLEEPERS

As a swallow, that sits on the roof,
I gaze on the world aloof ;

In the silence, when men lie sleeping,
I hear the noise of weeping :

The tears, by Day derided,
To tender Night confided.

Ah, now I listen, I cannot delay
In thoughts apart ; I must not stay.

The doors are closed and fast : unseen,
With stealthy feet I glide between.

I see the sleepers asleep in their beds,
Negligent arms, motionless heads ;

Beautiful in the bloom of slumber,
Peaceful armies without number.

Not here I linger : the sigh of those
That sleep not, draws me with answered throes.

A mother, mapping her day of cares,
On her sleeping baby softly stares.

A youth, by shameful sorrow torn,
Thinks on the unendurable morn.

By her husband, a wife unhappy lies,
With bitter heart and open eyes.

An old man hears the voice of the wave,
His dear son's cold, unquiet grave.

Alone in the lonely, listening night
A child lies still in dumb affright :

The burden of all dark things unknown
Weighs on his trembling heart like stone.

A man remembers his dead love's smile,
And his tranquil courage is quelled awhile.

My heart is heavy with love and pain ;
The tears within me oppress my brain.

O what shall I tell you, you that ache
And number the laggard hours awake ?

O stabbed and stricken, what soothing art
Shall I use, to assuage the wounds that smart ?

The consolation that, ere I knew
Love and sorrow, I fancied true,

Is faint and helpless, now I find,
As beauty told in the ears of the blind :

And I cannot tell, if I would, the thought
That strengthens me most, when my heart is
wrought.

O brother, that cannot the days undo,
Could I but the reckoning pay for you !

O mother, sink your head in peace,
And I will your knot of care release.

Dear child, give me your dread to bear :
I hold your hand, I stroke your hair,

It is I, who love you, that watch and keep
Darkness from you, the while you sleep.

I have no counsel ; I know not why
In your breasts the arrows burning lie ;

I cannot heal your hurts, nor take
The sharp iron out of souls that ache.

O yet, as I watch, the lashes close
A little, the eyes their lids dispose ;

The hand that fondly lies in mine
Relaxes ; the wearied heads decline.

And now on wings the sorrows flee
From the happy sleepers, hither to me.

O noiseless sorrows, darkly thronging,
My heart is prepared : my tender longing

You alone can appease, with tears,
With pangs, with passion, with shame, with fears.

Feed on my heart that is open and bare,
Feed your fill, sorrow and care :

Take me, pains of all souls forlorn.
For O too swiftly arrives the morn.

II

SUMMER NIGHT

COME let us forth, and wander the rich, the
murmuring night !
The shy, blue dusk of summer trembles above
the street ;
On either side uprising glimmer houses pale :
But me the turbulent babble and voice of crowds
delight ;
For me the wheels make music, the mingled
cries are sweet ;
Motion and laughter call : we hear, we will not
fail.

For see, in secret vista, with soft, retiring stars,
With clustered suns, that stare upon the throngs
below,
With pendent dazzling moons, that cast a noon-
day white,
The full streets beckon : Come, for toil has
burst his bars,
And idle eyes rejoice, and feet unhasting go.
O let us out and wander the gay and golden
night.

III

THE LITTLE DANCERS

LONELY, save for a few faint stars, the sky
Dreams ; and lonely, below, the little street
Into its gloom retires, secluded and shy.
Scarcely the dumb roar enters this soft retreat ;
And all is dark, save where come flooding rays
From a tavern window : there, to the brisk
measure
Of an organ that down in an alley merrily plays,
Two children, all alone and no one by,
Holding their tattered frocks, through an airy
maze
Of motion, lightly threaded with nimble feet,
Dance sedately : face to face they gaze,
Their eyes shining, grave with a perfect pleasure.

IV

WHITECHAPEL HIGH ROAD

LUSTY life her river pours
Along a road of shining shores.
The moon of August beams
Mild as upon her harvest slopes ; but here
From man's full-breath'd abounding earth
Exiled she walks, as one of alien birth,
The pale, neglected foster-mother of dreams.
For windows with resplendent stores
Along the pavement dazzle, and outstare
The booths that front them ; there,
To the throng which loiters by in laughing
streams
Babble the criers: and 'mid eager sounds
The flaming torches toss to the wind their hair,
And ruddy in trembling waves the light
Flushes cheeks of wondering boys
Assembled, their lips parted and eyes bright,
As the medicine-seller his magic herb expounds,
Or some old man displays his painted toys.

Deaf with a vacant stillness of the tomb,
At intervals a road deserted gapes,
Where Night shrinks back into her proper gloom,
Frighted by boisterous flare
Of the flame, that now through a cluster of
green grapes
Skines wanly, or on striped apple and smooth
pear
Flits blushing; now on rug or carpet spread
In view of the merry buyers, the rude dyes
Re-crimsons, or an antic shadow throws
Over the chestnut brazier's glowing eyes;
And now the sleeping head
Of a gipsy child in his dim corner shows,
Huddled against a canvas wall, his bed
An ancient sack: nor torch, nor hundred cries
Awake him from his sweet, perfect repose.

But thou, divine moon, with thine equal beam
Dispensing patience, stealest unawares
The thoughts of many that pass sorrowful on
Else undiverted, amid the crowd alone:
Embroiderest with beauty the worn theme
Of trouble; to a fancied harbour calm
Steerest the widow's ship of heavy cares;
And on light spirits of lovers, radiant grown,
Dropest an unimaginable balm.
Yet me to-night thy peace rejoices less
Than this warm human scene, that of rude earth
Pleasantly savours, nor dissembles mirth,

Nor grief, nor passion : sweet to me this press
Of life unnumbered, where if hard distress
Be tyrant, hunger is not fed
Nor misery pensioned with the ill-tasting bread
Of pity ; but such help as Earth ordains
Betwixt her creatures, bound in common pains,
Brother from brother, without prayer, obtains.

V

THE GOLDEN GALLERY AT SAINT PAUL'S

THE Golden Gallery lifts its aery crown
O'er dome and pinnacle: there I leaned and
gazed.

Is this indeed my own familiar town,
This busy dream? Beneath me spreading hazed
In distance large it lay, nor nothing broke
Its mapped immensity. Golden and iron-brown,
The stagnant smoke
Hung coiling above dense roofs and steeples dim.
The river, a serpent pale, my wandering eye
Lightened; but houses pressed to his silver brim.
With charging clouds the sky
Broad shadows threw. And now in a sudden
shower

A veil sweeps toward me; violent drops fall hard:
Then softly the sun returns on chimney and
tower,
And the river flashes, barred
With shadowy arches; warm the wet roofs shine,
And the city is stricken with light from clouds
aglow,

Uplifting in dazzling line
O'er valleys of ashy blue, their wrinkled snow.

I leaned and gazed: but into my gazing eyes
Entered a sharp desire, a strange distress.
East I looked, where the foreign masts arise
In rough sea-breathing reaches of broad access;
And North to the hills, and South to the golden
haze,

But nowhere found satisfaction more.
Beneath me, the populous ways
Muttered; but idly vast their troubled roar
Went up; I heard no longer: before me rose
Pale as, at morning, mist from autumn streams,
The longing of men made visible, helpless woes,
Fountains of love wasted, and trampled dreams.
Escaped from hearts of youth, or aged brain,
Hither they floated, hither fled.
Then thou, O city of strife, mother of pain,
Faded'st; and out of the mist a new city
I built in dream, the stones of it raised with tears,
And founded deep in hearts that have richly bled;
But watched, through mightier years,
By towers of faith, and girdled with walls of pity.

VI

THE BATHERS

HITHER, from thirsty day
And stifling labour and the street's hot glare,
To twilight shut away
Beyond the soft roar, under hovering trees,
Hither the gleeful multitudes repair,
And by the open, echoing, evening shore,
On the dim grass, to the faint freshened breeze,
With laughter their delighted bodies bare.

Peaceful above the sunset's burning smoke,
Star and white moon lure on the eastern night.
Already tasting of that wished delight.
The great elms stir their boughs,
As from the day's hot languor they awoke.
But the gliding cool of water whispering calls
The bathers, in soft-plunging falls
To overtake its ripple with swift stroke,
Or pillowing their upward faces drowse
On undulation of an easy peace ;
Miraculous release

Of heavy spirits, laving all desire
With satisfaction and with joy entire.

Strange now the factory's humming wheel, the
cry
Of tireless engines, the swift-hoisted bales
Unnumbered ; strange the smell of ordered wares
In the shop's dimness : noonday traffic fails
Out of the wave-washed ear ; stiff office stool,
And busy hush : and like a turbid dream,
The tavern's glittering fume insensibly
Ebbs with the hot race and the glutton stream
Of labour, thieving the dear sands of youth.
But ever closer, like sweet-tasting truth,
The vivid drench, the yielding pressure cool ;
And like a known touch comes the fitful breeze
From murmuring silence : the suspended trees
Above, the wet drops that from hair and beard
Run down the rippled back, are real and sweet.
Warm are the breathing limbs, and the firm feet
Tread lightly the firm ground, or lightly race
To mirthful cries : while Evening, nearer heard
And felt, a presence of invisible things
Inbreathes, as to the nostril keen she brings
The darkling scented freshness of the grass.

O now from raiment of illusion shed
The perfect body moves, rejecting care,
And to mysterious liberty remits
The rejoicing mind, in native pasture fed ;

And mates its glory with the priceless air,
The universal beam, whatever fits
Untamable spirits, nor is bought nor sold ;
Equalled with heroes old,
That beautifully people the green morn
Of time, and from pale marble, young and wise,
Gaze past our hurrying world, our triumphs worn,
And our hearts trouble with their peaceful eyes.

At last, dispersing slow
Between the vague stems, under leafy gloom
And starry stillness, the groups homeward go,
With lingering voices gay : yet some awhile
Keep silence ; they, upon the inmost heart
Of sacred quiet apprehend the bloom.
Like phantoms the bright streets their eyes be-
guile,
As they re-enter the engulfing flow ;
A little longer to play out their part,
A place, a name in the harsh dream resume.

VII

DEPTFORD

WELL is it, shrouded Sun, thou spar'st no ray
To illumine this sad street ! A light more bare
Would but discover more this bald array
Of roofs dejected, windows patched that stare
From sordid walls : for the shy breath of Spring,
Her cheek of flowers, or fragrance of her hair,
Thou could'st not, save to cheated memory, bring.

Alas ! I welcome this dull mist, that drapes
The path of the heavy sky above the street,
Casting a phantom dimness on these shapes
That pass, by toil disfeatured, with slow feet
And sad mistrustful eyes ; while in the mire
Children a mockery of play repeat,
Dreadly to satisfy their starved desire.

Yet O, what clouds of heaviness deter
My spirit ; what sad vacancy impedes !
I am like some far-ventured traveller,
Whom, in a forest vast, entangled weeds
Have hindered ; over whom green darkness fills

The inextricable boughs, and stifling feeds
A poisonous fear, that sinks on him and chills.

Nor finds he faith, amid the monstrous trees
Rooted in silence, peopled with strange cries
And stealthy shadows (where alone he sees
Rank growths of the hot marsh, but watching eyes
Imagines), to believe the self-same bark
He leans on, lifts to the unclouded skies
Its crest victorious from that cradle dark.

I with like pain and languor am oppress :
Me too a forest upon poison fed,
Me too the marsh and the rank weeds infest.
Almost I trace in the dumb pall o'erhead
A net of stubborn boughs that dimly mesh
The air ; I stifle : like a chain of lead
They weigh upon my soul, they bind my flesh.

I cannot breathe : the last and worst despair
Begins to invade me, numbing even desire
That panted for sweet draughts of light and air.
Dumb walls against me with blind heaven con-
spire :

Incredible the sun seems now, a ghost
I dreamed of in my dreams ; unreal fire.
The light is blotted out, the blue is lost.

Was it mirage, the glow I fancied warm
On human cheeks, the beauty of my kind ?

I feel it fading from me, a brief charm
Flying at touch. Blow hither, storms of wind !
Strike hither, strong sun, to my dulled heart's
core !

Awake, disturb me, lest mine eyes grown blind,
By fatal use to a foul dream resigned,
Accept for Nature's body this, her sore.

VIII

THE ESCAPE

DESTINY drives a crooked plough
And sows a careless seed ;
Now through a heart she cuts, and now
She helps a helpless need.

To-night from London's roaring sea
She brings a girl and boy ;
For two hearts, used to misery,
Opens a door of joy.

Wandering from hateful homes they came,
Till by this fate they meet.
Then out of ashes springs a flame ;
Suddenly life is sweet.

Together, where the city ends,
And looks on Thames's stream,
That under Surrey willows bends
And floats into a dream.

Softly in one another's ear
They murmur childish speech ;
Love that is deeper and more dear
For words it cannot reach.

Above them the June night is still ;
Only with sighs half-heard
Dark leaves above them flutter and thrill,
As with their longing stirred ;

And by the old brick wall below
Rustling, the river glides ;
Like their full hearts, that deeply glow,
Is the swell of his full tides.

To the farther shore the girl's pale brow
Turns with desiring eyes :
Annie, what is it you're wishing now ?
She lifts her head and sighs.

Willie, how peaceful 'tis and soft
Across the water ! See,
The trees are sleeping, and stars aloft
Beckon to you and me.

I think it must be good to walk
In the fields, and have no care ;
With trees, and not with men to talk.
O, Willie, take me there !

Now hand in hand up to the Night
They gaze, and she looks down
With large mild eyes of grave delight;
The mother they have not known.

Older than sorrow she appears,
Yet than themselves more young;
She understood their childish tears,
Knew how their love was sprung.

The simple perfume of the grass
Comes to them like a call.
Obeying in a dream they pass
Along the old brick wall;

By flickering lamp and shadowy door,
Across the muddy creek,
Warm with their joy to the heart's core,
With joy afraid to speak.

At last the open road they gain,
And by the Bridge, that looms
With giant arch and sloping chain
Over the river's glooms,

They pause: above, the northern skies
Are pale with a furnace light,
London with upcast, sleepless eyes
Possesses the brief night,

The wind flaps in the lamp; and hark!
A noise of wheels, that come
At drowsy pace; along the dark
A waggon lumbers home.

Slow-footed, with a wearied ease,
The patient horses step;
The rein relaxed upon his knees,
The waggoner nods asleep.

Annie, it goes the country way,
'Tis meant for you and me:
It goes to fields, and trees, and hay.
Come, it shall take us too!

He lifts her in his arms, as past
The great wheels groaning ride,
And on the straw he sets her fast,
And lightly climbs beside.

The waggoner nods his drowsy head,
He hears no sound: awhile
Softly they listen in sweet dread,
Then to each other smile.

Odours of dimly flowering June,
The starry stillness deep,
Possess their wondering spirits; soon,
Like children tired, they sleep.



The waggon creaks, the horses plod
By hedges clearer seen,
Down the familiar dusty road,
And past a village green.

The morning star shines in the pond:
A cock crows loud, and bright
The dawn springs in the sky beyond;
The birds applaud the light.

But on into the summer morn
Beneath the gazing east,
The sleepers move, serenely borne:
The world for them has ceased.

Destiny, thou that seest unclosed
A million eyelids now,
What house of joy, what net of woes,
For these preparest thou?

IX

AUGUST

IN drooping leaves of the plane
Hangs blue the early heat ;
Stirless, a delicate shade
Sleeps on the parching street.

I wander, this listless morning,
By the banks of the dazzling river ;
On the hot stones lean, where toward me
Lights from the water quiver.

And clasping hands upon eyes,
I plunge my thought in a dream
Of days when the sharp air stung
And the ice crushed cold in the stream ;

Vainly ! on body and mind
Has the tyrant sun his will ;
And to me, on the hot stone leaning,
The city is faint and still,

Is faint as listening sands,
Where, awed by the heavy calm
Of the desert heaven, listens,
For ever alone, the palm.

X

NOVEMBER

TOGETHER we laughed and talked in the warm-
lit room :

Out now, alone I come
Into the street, in the fall of the early night.
Shadowy skies, with a pale uncertain gloom,
Hover above the houses dim ; but bright
In wetness mirrored far,
Retreating lamps outshine the lingering light.
Hazily blue the air, heavy with dews
The wind ; and before me the cries and the
crowd,
And the sleepless murmur of wheels ; not loud,
For a magical softness all imbrues.
The softness estranges my sense : I see and I
hear,
But know 'tis a vision intangible, shapes that
seem.

All is unreal ; the sound of the falling of feet,
Coming figures, and far-off hum of the street ;
A dream, the gliding hurry, the endless lights,
Houses and sky, a dream, a dream !

XI

A WOMAN

O THOU that, facing the mirror darkly bright
In the shadowed corner, loiterest shyly fond,
To ask of thine own sad eyes a comfort slight,
Before thou brave the pathless world beyond ;

Not first to-night invades thy spirit this wild
Despair, when loneliness stabs thee ! Turned,
thy face
Trembles, and soft hesitation makes thee a child,
The child thou wast in some far, forgotten place,

Amid things for ever rejected. Thoughtest thou so
From the blankness of life to escape to a region
enjoyed,
Glowing, and strange ? Yet blank to-night, I
know,
Spreads life, my sister ; within thee a deeper void.

In all this city, methinks, so charged with pain,
None suffers as thou ; desiring what thou dost
With insupportable longing, and still in vain
Desiring, still accepting what thou must.

Where tarries he, Love, the adored one? In
fields unknown
Roams he apart, or in sound of a pleasant stream
Sleeps? Nay, dwells he in cloudy rumour alone,
A name, a vision, a sweet, eluding dream?

He lives, he lives, my sister; yet rarely to men
He appears: they touch but his robe, and believe
it is he.
But soft, with inaudible feet, he is flown, nor
again
Comes soon; rejoicing still to be wayward and
free.

A moment, ev'n now, he was near thee: invisible
wings
Brushed by thee; and infinite longing, to follow,
to find
That vision truth, o'ercomes thee,—thy heart's
sad things
To tell in a trusted ear, on a bosom kind.

Alas! not so he is won: when the last despair
Encamps in thy heart, at last when all seems vain,
Then, perchance, he will steal to thee unaware,
And loose thy tears, and understand thy pain.

XII

THE CONVICT

By the warm road-side, where chestnut and thorn
The brightness shaded, supine, at ease,
A felon, freed that morn,
Lay idle, and wondered, gazing up through
the trees.

O strange no more to be one of a band
Numbered and known ; to lose the measure
Of days divided and planned :
To think for the morrow, to choose work or
pleasure.

His ear the jostling roar of the street
Amazed : he felt the crowd like a load ;
And welcomed, refuge sweet,
Deserted suburb, and silent, shady road.

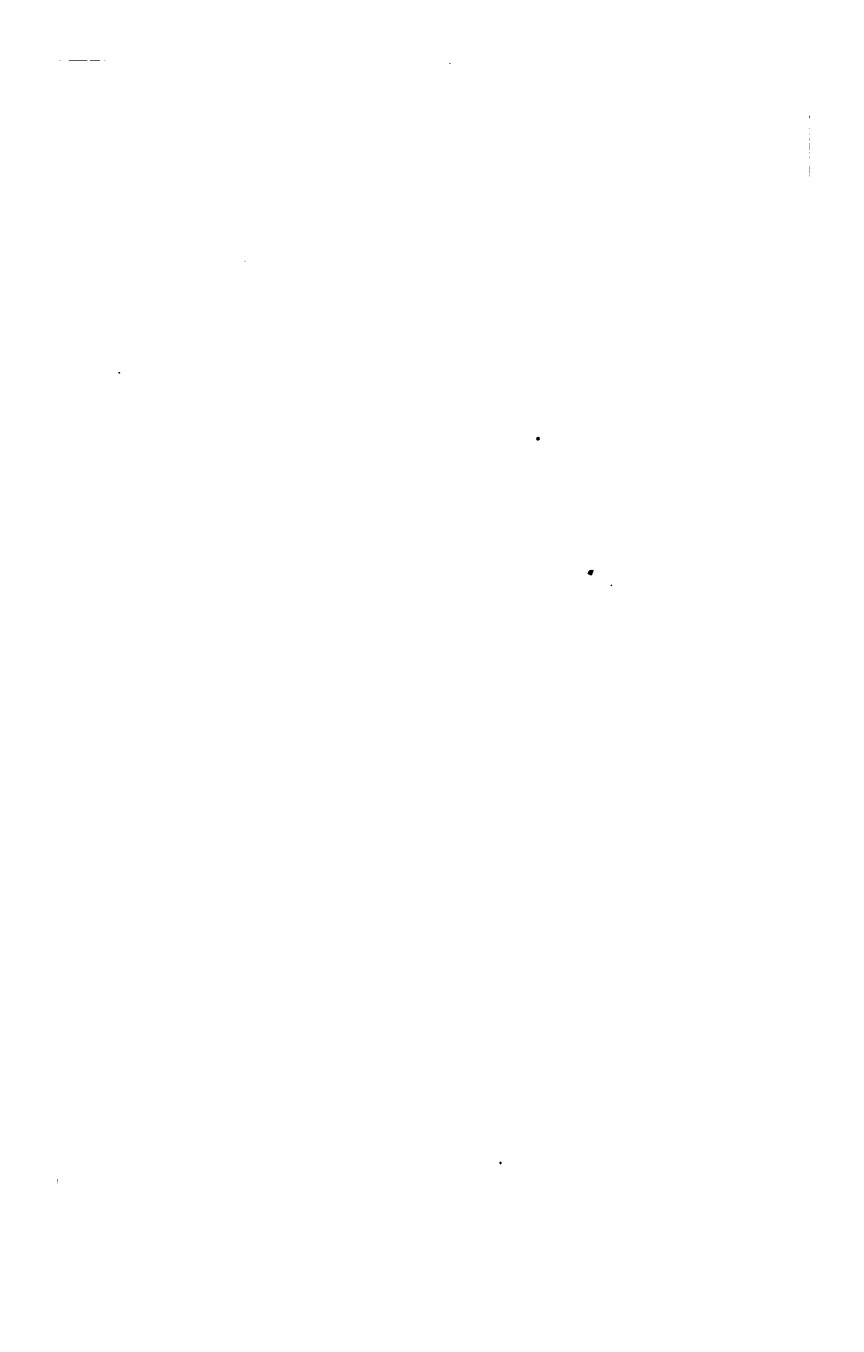
For now, with his hands, habitual stones
Of the pavement he touched : close to the wall
He nestled, and felt to his bones
The warmth, and the shadow cool on his fore-
head fall.

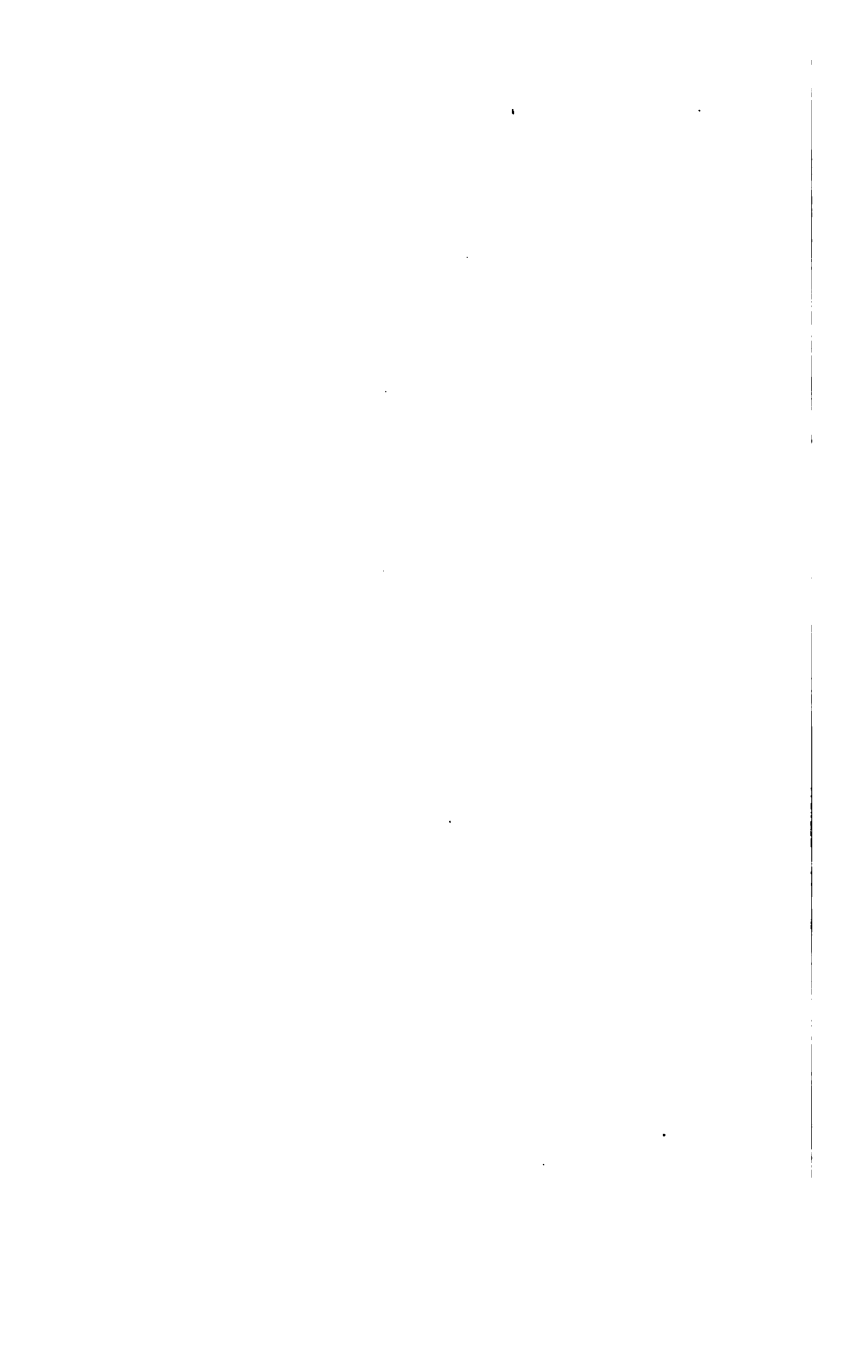
And catching a leaf from the chestnut strayed
He held it, glowing green in the light,
Transparent, with veins inlaid;
And thrust the world and its vastness away
from sight.

Children from school, as they passed him, eyed
His shorn temples, and whispering turned
To mock him: he, on his side,
Abstracted, his limbs disposed to a slumber
earned.

A grave citizen, homeward bound,
Perceived him, as negligent still he lay,
And swerved askance, and frowned,
And crossed to the opposite pavement, and
went his way.

But warming him shone the indifferent noon;
And chestnut and thorn on his sleeping head
In the careless glory of June
Scattered their delicate blossom of white and
red.





THE PRAISE OF LIFE

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BY

LAURENCE BINYON

LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

1896

RECEIVED

R

DEDICATED TO

OLIVIER GEORGES DESTRÉE

THE PRAISE OF LIFE

I

MONTENEGRO

COILED in shadow, the serpent seas
Engirdle perilous hills sublime :
 By tortuous, steep degrees
 Toward the morn I climb.

Before me the mountain soaring vast
Secludes the bright east ; cold the air
 Descends from ridges, massed
 In peaks, snowily fair.

But pale in the northern distance blushes
On sparkling ranges a light austere ;
 Tingeing the shade, it flushes
 Edge and barrier sheer.

THE PRAISE OF LIFE

Cattaro roofs and Cattaro quay
Grow faint and delicate; ships that ride
On the dense blue slumbering sea
Dwindle; on either side

From mirroring gulfs the mountains bare
Are mapped to the heaven, strange as a dream;
The Adriatic afar
Trembles, a molten gleam:

Till the sun salutes me, met with him
On the naked summit; closed behind,
That vision of countries dim
Pales and fades from the mind.

Now drinking the eager lofty air,
The spirit leaps, as the eyes behold
Valleys severely fair,
Freedom's fortress of old.

Young, stern soldiers in rich attire,
Haughtily moving with silent pace
And eyes of a tranquil fire;
Sons of a tameless race;

Aged mothers, bowed with toil,
Old men, bearded and gray, are here:
Plants of a stubborn soil
That knows not the seed of fear.

O Mountain, mother of men, that bearest
Heroes; foster-mother of fame!

I hail thee; well thou wearest
Thy dark, invincible name.

Thou plantest the footstep firm, and the heart
In the breast strengthenest, hardy to try
Peril, and play its part
With full, unwavering eye.

At mighty breasts of the ancient hills
Nourished, thy sons in their veins yet keep
The force that feeds and fills
Torrents, to dance and leap.

Trees that with clenched root possess
Their rocky beds, oak and pine,
Alone thou endurest; nor less
Permittest in children of thine.

O small and remote the loud affairs
Of cities appear: the dusty strife,
Choking with envious care
The caged glory of life,

Recedes: from the market of wrangling cries,
Like a falcon, the spirit expands her wings;
For the mountains, the mountains rise,
And the heart, answering, sings.

And clearer, with each step climbing higher,
The wide horizon dilates within;
Keener the keen desire
Freedom complete to win:

Till now with imperious joy I taste
The eternal fountain: Life supreme,
That of old in order placed
The spheres of her starry dream;

That moulded this blanching sea of stone,
In silence raging, motionless hurled,
Thrills me, myself to own,
And cast the cloak of the world.

For now no longer a slave, yoked ill
With marching Destiny, marches here,
His hours alert to fill,
Man, of the mountain a peer.

As the tamer of horses matches his stride
To his vehement, proudly pacing steed,
He goes, strong Fate beside,
Fearless, a master, freed.

II

DOWN IN A SHADED GARDEN

Down in a shaded garden
I laid upon earth my head :
The deep trees murmured, darkly fresh,
Over my bed ;
I looked through living leaves to the sky,
Odours and songs were quivering nigh ;
The warm grass touched my cheek as I lay
And care from me was far away.
As a child to its mother, to Earth I drew ;
I felt her true.

Of Life, sweet Life, enamoured
I closed my eyes, to feel
The sweetness pierce to the inmost veins
And the whole heart steal ;
Sacred Life, more sweet and fair
Than all her children of earth and air,
Fountain dearer than joy in the breast,
In the blue I adored, in the grass I caressed :
Then Earth, my mother, leaned to my ear,
And spoke me clear.

To thee the rose her odour,
Her glory dedicates ;

And thee the pink's sweet-budded fringe
Of snow awaits.
For thee is the sprinkled fire of the broom,
For thee the azalea burns her bloom ;
O child, does thy heart not tell thee how
Thy joy is answered from every bough ?
In the throat of the bird, in the sap of the tree,
'Tis all for thee !

Stricken with joy and wonder
I raised my eyes around,
And saw what mystery flowered for me
In that enchanted ground !
The roses, the roses rich entwined,
Heavy with love to me inclined ;
Yearning up from the dusk of death
They trembled toward me with living breath.
O none that loved me is dead, I knew,
And each is true.

Now forth to the world attended
By the spirits of that hour,
I bear within me a charm secure
As the scent asleep in a flower.
Wise men now, profound in care,
Pass by me with distrustful air :
But the child perceives, and the careless boy
Now admits me of his joy.
And my love in a glory enshrines my bliss
With a laughing kiss.

III

ILLUMINATION

Is it joy, or is it peace,
Senses' magical release,
That triumphant swells my heart
Where I walk the fields apart?
Miracle of morning new!
Meadows dabbled fresh in dew;
Straight stemmed woods that darkly still
Stand upon the rounded hill,
Where the silver saplings gleam
On the fringes of a dream;
Mists that in faint fleeces blur
All the frayed plumes of the fir,
And that whiten the fresh green
Of the bosomed field between,
Melted ever more and more
By the level beams that pour
Sparkling through the sleepy, rare,
Delicately coloured air;
Flowers that wake from peace to peace;

Subtle-scented loneliness;
World that drenches through and through
A stillness exquisite as dew;
Ploughman ploughing nigh at hand
Along the open hazy land,
Calm as though a part of those
Brown furrows over which he goes :—
O what fount is it in me
All this solitude sets free?
Far from miseries, that dart
Pangs of pity at the heart,
Far from prisoning tasks that hide
The vision true of freedom wide,
Through a melting curtain clear
The stir of spring I see and hear :
Softly the young beams surprise
My own spirit's mysteries,
And my still thought, scarce aware,
Mingles into radiant air.
Now my eyes I cast around
On an unsubstantial ground :
As I gaze, I seem to grow
Into Earth, her longing know,
Feel the swelling of the bud
Quicken warm within my blood ;
And the grasses shooting higher
Are a wave of my desire.
Deep and deeper sinks my mind
To a charm intense resigned,

Deep into the grain of things
Dissolved with its imaginings.

Now the ploughman ploughs, as he
Furrowed lines of destiny :
Now the oak his shadow due
Claims as if from earth it grew,
Not by casual beams of day
Given, and then stolen away.
I too from Time's ample womb
Summon my appointed doom,
And conjure the hours to bring
Each its rapture, each its sting.
In a vista long appears
The close-peopled street of years.
There the hands that I shall clasp
Are stretched out, my own to grasp.
Ready in my heart the throe
Burns for each awaiting woe.
Sorrow with her silent spade
Graves for unborn hopes hath made.
Joy about me glides her arm
Ignorant of grief and harm,
Like a child that only knows
Where 'tis loved and thither goes.
Onward on the path begun
I perceive my footsteps run,
Yet backward stretching all I find
In the mirror of my mind ;

In a hundred sleeps behold
My own face becoming old ;
And inaudibly drawn near
Death has whispered in my ear.

Now my soul disturbed at last
Trembles at the future vast.
How shall I the long stair climb ?
How support thy burden, Time ?
Ah, to mould the hours unsure,
In my bosom, Fate, endure !



IV

FIRST DAY OF SUMMER

SWEETEST of all delights are the vainest, merest ;
Hours when breath is joy, for the breathing's
sake.

Summer awoke this morning, and early awake
I rose refreshed, and gladly my eyes saluted
The entering beam of the sun that laughed his
clearest.

I too laughed for pleasure, and vowed straight-
way

To stream and sun the flower of an idle day,
With summer sweetly enjoyed and friends well
suited.

Merry were we, as stepping aboard we laid
The shaven oars in order ; merry the leap
Of the oar, that grasped the water and stirred
from sleep

A wave, to tremble past us in foamy rings.
With rhyming fall, and with bright returning
blade

Impetuous music urges the rippling keel ;
Softly our necks the flow of the breezes feel ;
And blue, and thronged with birds, the morning
sings.

And lo, the elms, in a day re clothed and gleam-
ing

In delicate youth, above us stir their leaves.
The eye, to naked winter used, receives
A magic pleasure : and still the shore we follow
Winding in flowery meadows ; freshly streaming
The river meets us ever from fields unknown :
As light we travel his curving mirror lone,
No longer I envy you, O frolic swallow.

Till moored at noon by shadowy turf, and ended
Awhile that pleasant toil, what relish keen
At ease to lie amid flowers, with rustling green
O'ershaded ; there, reclined by a bubbling pool,
The rushing weir in murmur and foam blended,
Entrancing ear and eye, caresses the brain
With smooth perpetual sound, the lulling strain
Of water weariless poured, and glittering cool.

O then, refreshed, in the level light serene
Our boat re-entering, her prow homeward
turned,
How soft we glided ; soft, as evening burned
Through drooping leaves, our liquid furrow stirred

The dim green heights of the elm, reflected green
In shadowy water ; at last the dreaming shore
From its own enchanted mirror we knew no
more :

Softly we glided downward, and spoke no word.

Nor took we land, till the West in a blush was
dying,

And over the twilit meadow we loitered home.

Even now in my ear is rushing the constant
foam,

And the dappled stream is alight with the wind's
laughter,

As I taste, in the cool of the darkness dreamily
lying,

The sun yet warm upon limbs that sweetly
ache :

Drowsed deliciously, still I linger awake,
Only to keep my delight, and to look not after.

V

SONG

WHAT boat is this that bears
My soul on an ocean, fanned
By new arriving airs
From an undiscovered land ?
Is this Love's magic boat, and these
The waves of his unsounded seas ?

Pangs of the soul's desire
My voyage swiftly urge ;
Day-long I flee, afire
To overtake the verge ;
But still into infinity
Escape before me sky and sea.

Anchor, my heart ; abide,
And search the seas no more.
Out of this water wide
Never shall dawn a shore,
Till wave and sun have ceased to gleam,
And wondrous truth dies out in dream.

VI

SUDDEN JOY

O WHAT magic shall compare
Of the fresh earth or bright air
To the joy that love around
My full heart so swift has wound,
Far beyond hope's trembling flight
Back recoiling in delight.

Swifter than the lime that weaves
Out of radiant sudden leaves
'Twixt enchanting night and night
Her green tent of fragrant light,
Joy with bloom arrays me sweet,
Spring within a day complete.

VII

PALE are the words I build for my delight
To house in; pale as the chill mist that holds
An ardent morn. My fire to others' sight
But dimly burns through the frail speech it
moulds;

I cast but shadows from my inward light.
But, O my Joy, thou understandest well
Both what I can and what I cannot tell.

VIII

THE OAK

SPLENDOURS of sunset burned upon the ground,
As from the lane's deep shade
Emerging, a warm grassy fringe we found
Skirting the forest glade,
And in the midst a solitary oak.
No sound the bright and haunting stillness broke
As we beheld the wonder of this tree,
His shadowy core invaded thick by rays
That kindled the rough trunk, and ardently
Made burn the massy branches, thrusting higher
And wider their strong foliage, knotted sprays
Of tawny and bronze leaves defined in fire.

Silence possessed us pausing, and our eyes
Stayed marvelling to behold
In that illumined solitude arise
Those fiery branches old.
It seemed a mighty apparition brought
From far to trouble us ; planted beyond thought,
And budding calm into a time not ours.
Then, then smote full upon our inmost heart
Its mortal weakness ; vast and without bound
Our longing, but our scope brief as the flowers,
And of each other O what need profound !

IX

THE DRIFTWOOD GATHERERS

ALONG the deep shelfe of the abandoned shore
Bowed, with slow pace and careful eyes that keep
The track they travel, move an aged pair.
The full voice of the Atlantic holds the air
In turbulent uproar :
The sad South over desolation blows,
The clouds in wild race never sleep.
But they the shaken snows
Of trampling breakers heed not, nor the hiss
Of quarrelling fringes hurried up the strand,
To fade upon the darkened, glistening sand.
Skirting that fretful line, they from amid
The matted shells and seaweed heedfully
Glean their poor treasure hid,
The scattered driftwood, fragments bleached and
dry.

Implacable ocean, in whose ear
Even at this instant, cries come uselessly
From mouths that the salt wave and gripping
fear

Together choke, far in the lonely storm,
Where mighty ships, conquered and battling,
drown ;

He to this powerless pair their simple store
Permits, refraining: fearing not his frown
They his expended rages hold in fee ;
And them his violent armies wound no more
Than the pale poppy on the neglected shore.

But now as evening closes, they begin
Their homeward path, bordered with heath and
pine,

And see afar their cottage roof, and wall
White under red leaves of the October vine ;
Till glad and tired they win
The door, and let their cherished burden fall,
Then on the swept stones make their happy fire.
Soon a flame leaps, and in the wavering gloom
The dim wall smiles, and every nook of home
Invites them warm in welcoming attire.
The ripe gourd basks his jovial yellow girth ;
Rosily burnished gleam the onion strings
Above ; the pottage simmers in low mirth,
And in an earthen brazier chestnuts crack.
But each is busy now, that nothing lack.
And she in snatches sings
Old songs, and he with chiding feigned the while
Chides her, and meets her answer with a smile.
At last, when all is done to their desire,

They sup: the low lamp kindles their old cheeks
And features moulded in the cast of Earth,
Their infinite companion: she but speaks
Simply to them, in few words; death and birth,
Winter and summer, rain and frost and sun:
Not they a care beyond the task invent.
Enough, if day provide their need; day done,
They by each others's side sleep, well content.

X

THE HEATHER BRANCH

OUT of the pale night air,
From wandering lone in the warm scented wood,
The sighing, shadowy, bright solitude
Of leafy glade, and the rough upland bare,
To thee I come, a branch
Of heather in my hand,—the sprays yet keep
Drops of the dewy moonshine trembling there—
And my heart filled full of a happy mood,
To thee that wakest, while the others sleep.

Dost thou not know me? Yet I know
Thee, and the ache that will not let thee rest.
When thou wast tossing, deep oppressed,
And thy hot eyes the darkness sought in vain,
I saw thee, and I longed to soothe thy pain.
Sorrow it is not that o'erwhelms thee so,
But the perfidious touch, that unperceived
Thy joy and even thy desire has thieved,
Till all at once waking to where thou art,
Upon thy shuddering heart

Look in with dreadful faces the calm Hours,
Advancing to despoil thee utterly.
Thou longest to be free.
But O against thyself didst thou conspire,
And hope grown gray and rusting powers
Tell thee that vain is thy desire,
And counsel thee from all thy care to cease,
Proposing to thy fretting sense outworn
Vacancy absolute and utter peace.

And is peace empty ? O look forth
Upon the moonlight spread
In stillness over the reclining earth.
The stillness of a trance profound it seems
And a world bright and uninhabited,
Yet how immortally, how richly teems !
Hush thy senses, and hark,
The silence fills
With sounds unnumbered, as the dark
With worlds, whose coming not the swiftest sight
Affirms, yet in an instant they are bright.
Listen, the whole air thrills
With gentle and perpetual stir of birth,
Softer than sighs, budding and flourishing
Upward of each austere or tender thing ;
They pine not to haste back under the ground,
But to embrace their being and to abound.
Send thy thought onward over miles and miles
Of silence, till at last it apprehend

Faintly, the vastness in which thou hast part,
Till the wrought cities melt like shadowy isles
Distant in radiance of the endless main,
And of its solitude be purged thy heart.
All this, dear friend,
A thousand thousand spirits, and deep bliss,
And waves of swelling and subsiding pain
Doth this immensity of peace contain.

But now, O now, give me no grief to bear,
For thou must take my joy; there is no room
For grief, and I from care
Turn thee. The moonlit air
Blows dimly to enchanted sense
Odour and memory, it knows not whence,
And our forgetful souls reminds to bloom!
Does thy heart tremble? I that have not sought
Joy, but have found, I bid thee refuse nought,
But take the whole world welcome to thy breast,
Else in no part possessest.
The Hours await thee; ah, they too
Love to be loved: woo them and ever woo.
Give me thy hand, and farewell: see, I break
My branch of heather: this I take
And bear in memory of this night and thee:
But keep this by thee, to remember me.

XI

ALL the night the voices of ocean around my
sleep
Their murmuring undulation sleepless kept.
Rocked in a dream I slept,
Till drawn from trances deep
At the invocation of morning calling strong,
I felt through sanguine eyelids light suffuse
My brain, and woke to a wonder of glad hues,
And over the trembling choir of birds that
throng
Among the tamarisk and the glittering dew
I heard, O sea, thy song.

A charm has lured my feet, and I to the beach
come down,
The bright abandoned beach, the curving strand,
And stripping upon the sand
I meet the salt spray o'er my body blown,
Embracing swift the jubilant waves that send
Their triumphing surges shouting to the shores
around,
Until in a rushing splendour senses drowned

The solid earth forgetting, haste to spend
Their ever-fresh delight in the glory of swift
sound

And the thunder without end.

But now from the wave withdrawn in indolent
ease

Again desire upsprings to know thy heart.

I pace by the foam apart

Or linger in shadow shy, removed from any
breeze.

Come, thou hast more to tell, thou hast not done.

I will be patient, all day lying in wait to hear

Upon the warm rock ledges hearkening near,

Of all thy thousand tones to lose not one,

While the shattered surf blows o'er me, leaping
clear

To the seaward-journeying sun.

Radiant, hurrying delight of crests that dance
and advance,

Careless, arrogant legions, tossing their milky
manes;

How the wet light leaps and rains

From shivered plumes that melt in a lightning
glance

And splendour of airy tresses backward blown!

What shouts of exultation, laughter sweet,

Wail of vanishing hosts and sighs of defeat,

Irresistible menace and anguished moan ;
A thousand voices mingle in triumph and retreat :
But tell me, O sea, thine own !

Surely to happy mirth thou wooest my desire ;
Willing is my heart with thy young waves to
 roam,
Lightly tripping foam,
Ever laughing nearer, ever dancing higher.
Sweeter than all glory, where the spirit wills
With heart outpoured in song triumphant as the
 tide,
With eager, open heart, ever to ride and ride !
Yet now at height of joy what tumult fills
Thy rushing strength ? A sudden gloom invades
 thy pride
Resisted, an anger thrills.

Mutinous indignation that heavy Fate defies,
The ignorant rocks that set their sullen jaws,
In thy white flames that never pause
Rebelliously upleaping, my own heart I re-
 cognise.
I see the world's embattled towers uplift their
 height,
The wise, distrusting faces of them that trample
 truth ;
I see the bodies slain of hopeless hoping youth ;

And dark my heart upswells to the vainly echoing
fight,
Cries of the helpless, tears of idle ruth,
And the wrong I cannot right.

Melancholy, to thee must I my vows resign?
The bitterness of my spirit give away
To the bitter broken spray?
O down-drawn sighing streams, with you
repine?
Cover me, heavy waters, that I may hide my face
In darkness, nor behold the ruined flowers I
sowed
Desolately forsaken that so sweetly glowed.
Defeated too am I, and languish in my place,
And still as glory fades, I bear a heavier load,
And the desert spreads apace.

Figures of sorrow now in my remembrance stand,
I see the face of her that her children ask for
bread—
She turns away her head:
The face of him that all day furrows the lonely
land;
Women that ere the morning to their woe awake;
And him that sightless hears the murmur gaily
stream,
Knocking weary the pavement that opens not
for him.

O loud bewailing waves, you tremble as you
break,
And you lift your dirges wild as you vanish into
dream
For these and for my sake.

But hark! what voice emerges from the lament-
ing choir?
Surely Love is speaking! My heart trembles to
hear.

Now no more I fear,
I cast my grief behind, I have but one desire;
To give my soul entire, nor to count any cost,
To pour my heart in passionate unreason sweet,
To follow and to follow with ever faithful feet
The steps adored of Love, whatever peril crossed,
With bliss or woe extreme my longing to com-
plete,
In love divinely lost.

Sea, was this thy errand? Ah, but hush;
Again the wild lament, again the strife!
And now in mirth of life
Thy gleeful waters all overriding rush.
O have I heard at last? O now thy voices call
Mingled and sounding clear in a mighty voice
as one.
In my heart they mingle that rejecteth none;
Sorrow that no longer shall my head appal,

Love, my sweetest joy ; pain that I fear to shun ;
I need, I need them all.

Answerer of all my heart, troubled and tender
sea,

Proud as thy plumes, and like thy ruined foam

Faint, and ardent I come,

To find my soul, to merge and to be mate of thee.

I cast in the sleepless eddy joys and woes,

My swiftest sweetest hope, my darkest grief
forlorn ;

My whole heart I expend, embracing eve and
morn :

And lo ! in the striving surges trembling glows

Toward me, from passionate tumult airily born

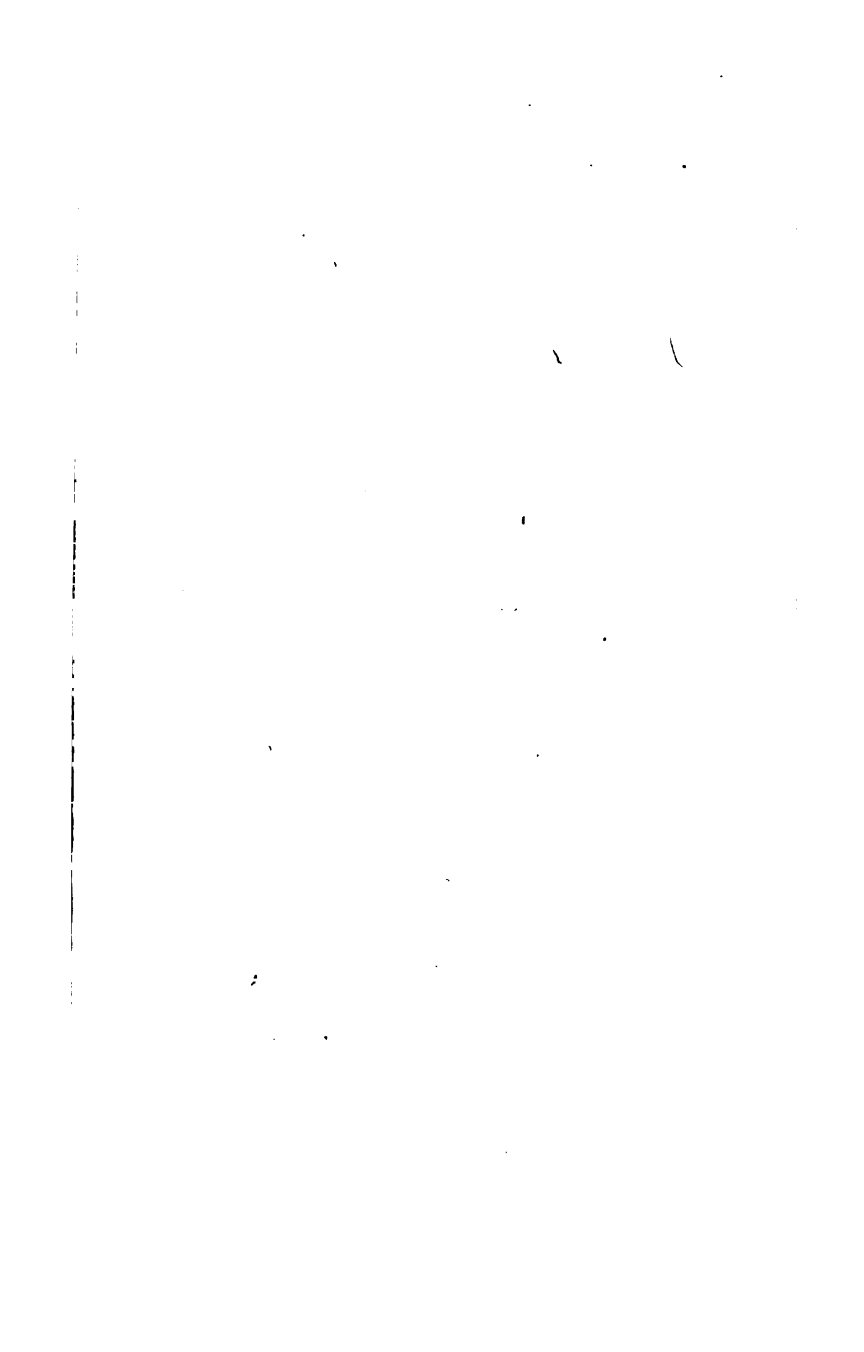
To beauty, a burning rose.

XII

WOULD'ST thou this monster, that we name the
world,
Who round the envied tree of blissful fruit
Lies like a dragon curled
In jealous watch, our venture to dispute;
Would'st thou that she were smoothly negligent,
By any pleader bent,
A tender judge, to tears and pity prone,
She that on love defeated builds her throne,
The spoiler strong, sanguine with our despairs,
She that the traitor in us holds in fee,
Rich with our woes, with our fears cruel, she
Whose easy wisdom the sad heart ensnares?

Rather rejoice that the immortal foe
To truceless war our weapons challenges.
She hath her task to do,
Her maw to fill, her rages to appease;
Nor less because the noble rebel claims
Exemption from her shames,
Is of her native harshness justified.
Sharp be our swords, trebly our armour tried,
Our hearts enduring and relentless be,
To look her 'twixt the eyes as conquering men
And take her worst of wounds. For then, O then,
If we can bear our freedom, we are free.





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